

Delaware Public Health Officials Confirm First Flu Case of the 2020-2021 Season

DOVER (Nov. 12, 2020) – The Delaware Division of Public Health (DPH) is announcing the state's first laboratory-confirmed case of influenza for the 2020-2021 flu season. The case, which also marks Delaware's first pediatric case of the season, involves a child under the age of 5 from Kent County.

"With the increase in COVID-19 cases we've seen over the past few weeks, it is more important than ever to get the flu vaccine if you haven't already," said Dr. DPH Director Karyl Rattay. "The flu vaccine won't prevent COVID-19, but it is effective at preventing the flu. The flu vaccine decreases the number of people who need to be treated for the flu. This means more health care supplies, resources, and professionals will be available on the front lines to fight the pandemic. By eliminating the need to visit your provider's office or be hospitalized for the flu, you help lower the risk of workers on the front lines getting sick."

The flu vaccine is recommended for Delawareans 6 months of age and older. Since it takes about two weeks after vaccination for antibodies that protect against influenza virus infection to develop in the body, it is important to get vaccinated as early as possible to give your body time to build immunity. Getting the flu vaccine now will also provide protection during the entire flu season. During the 2019-2020 flu season, Delaware recorded more than 7,000 laboratory-confirmed flu cases. Nearly 400 Delawareans were hospitalized due to the flu and 11 people died from flu complications.

A flu clinic schedule can be found at: <https://dhss.delaware.gov/dhss/dph/fluclinics.html>. Flu

vaccines also are offered through physician offices, many pharmacies and some grocery stores. To locate where flu vaccines near you are being offered, Google “CDC flu finder” and enter a ZIP code.

The flu is easy to transmit and you can get it even from seemingly healthy, but unvaccinated, children and adults. Children, older adults, and those who have chronic underlying medical conditions are most at risk for complications from the flu and are strongly encouraged to get vaccinated now.

In addition to getting an annual flu shot, Delawareans can prevent the spread of the flu the same way they can prevent COVID-19 and other respiratory illnesses: Wash hands frequently with soap and water or use alcohol-based hand sanitizers, cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue, wear a face covering when in public when in public, maintain 6 feet of space between others, especially those who reside outside of your own home, and avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth.

The flu and COVID-19 have many similar symptoms. They include fever or feeling feverish/chills, cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, fatigue (tiredness), sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, muscle pain or body aches, and headaches. Other signs and symptoms of COVID-19 that are different from flu

include a change in or loss of taste or smell. If you are sick, the best thing to do is call your health care provider to see if you should get tested for COVID-19 or come in for a visit.

Those sick with the flu should stay home from work, school and other gatherings and not return until they have been free of fever – with a temperature of less than 100 degrees F (37.8 degrees C), without the use of fever-reducing medications – for at least 24 hours. People with flu symptoms should avoid close contact with well people in the household – you can give

someone the flu 24 hours before you show symptoms and five to seven days after you get sick. Stay well-hydrated by drinking plenty of water and other clear liquids. Over-the-counter medicines can provide symptom relief, but if you suspect you have influenza, call your doctor as they may decide to provide antiviral medications to help hasten recovery and prevent serious complications. This is particularly important for those who feel very sick, are pregnant or have chronic medical conditions.

For more information about the flu and where to get vaccinated, visit flu.delaware.gov or call 1-800-282-8672.